

REMARKS

The indication of allowable subject matter in claims 1-8, 10, 11, 19, 20, 22 and 23 is acknowledged and appreciated. For the following reasons, it is respectfully submitted that all claims are in condition for allowance.

Claims 9, 12, 13 and 15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by Salatino et al., and claims 16, 17, 18 and 21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over Salatino et al. in view of Ohuchi. However, it is respectfully submitted that Salatino et al. is not prior art to the present application. The earliest effective date of Salatino et al. is its U.S. filing date of December 6, 2000, whereas the present application has an effective filing date of February 14, 2000 based on perfecting Applicants' claim to foreign priority in Applicants' response filed on September 9, 2003.

Based on the foregoing, it is respectfully requested that the above-mentioned rejections based on Salatino et al. be withdrawn.

Claims 9 and 14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by Umehara et al. ("Umehara"). Claim 9 is independent and has been amended to include the limitation of claim 10, which was not rejected over Umehara, so as to render this rejection moot. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the above-mentioned rejection over Umehara be withdrawn.

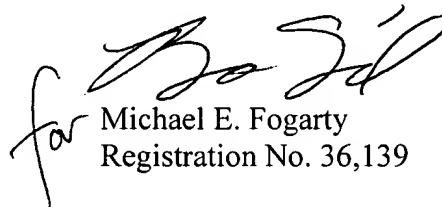
CONCLUSION

Having fully responded to all matters raised in the Office Action, Applicants submit that all claims are in condition for allowance, an indication for which is respectfully solicited. If there are any outstanding issues that might be resolved by an interview or an Examiner's amendment, the Examiner is requested to call Applicants' attorney at the telephone number shown below.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 500417 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

MCDERMOTT, WILL & EMERY

 #46,692
for Michael E. Fogarty
Registration No. 36,139

600 13th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20005-3096
(202) 756-8000 MEF/RMF:mcm
Facsimile: (202) 756-8087
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